

months as they await their immigration proceedings and the decision. These are not people who have robbed or hurt anyone or sold dope or anything like that. These are folks who are awaiting a decision in their immigration case. They are not criminals; they're awaiting immigration proceedings, decisions. These folks, these people in immigrant detention are just languishing, rotting.

There have been, since 2003, 107 people who have died in custody because they were in detention. If they were out, could they have gotten the medical attention that they needed? I'm sure in many cases they could have. The fact is that these are folks who are not serving criminal sentences. They haven't been convicted of hurting anyone or stealing people's property or doing anything wrong. They're just awaiting proceedings.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I was at an eighth grade graduation only a few days ago; and my daughter, who I was so proud of, was there with her friends and they were all abuzz—you know how kids that age can be. And I talked to another adult who I had known for a number of years because my older children went to school with her children and one of her children was in my daughter's class. And she said to me, you know, I want you to know it's good to see you. I was in detention. I recently got out of immigration detention. This is what this lady said to me. And it shocked me because my son, who is now 22 years old, was buddies with her son, who is now 22 years old, but they were running around my house when they were both seven and eight and nine years old and now here she is—I haven't seen her in a while—and she just told me that she had been there herself. I didn't even ask her how she got out—I was glad she was out—but the fact is that she had been in ICE detention herself. This is a woman who is a bright lady, smart, capable, raising children on her own, doing the best she can, happens to find her roots in Mexico. I didn't ask her about the details of her life, but I was concerned that she found herself in that awful situation.

I connected her with my office to do everything we could for her; but the fact is there is a human toll being taken on people every single day, people around us, people we know, people we don't even know what they're going through, but they have their own immigration nightmare that they're struggling through every single day.

Her children, I know the younger ones were born in the United States and I know the older ones came here at a very early age, they're my kids' close friends. But the fact is that it kind of struck me right across the face like a cold bucket of water that here is this lady who I know. I couldn't exactly call her a friend, but I can say that this is a person who I know, who I respect, and who was living her own private nightmare with regard to immigration.

It seems to me that the rules ought to be clearer, they ought to be fairer,

they ought to be predictable. It seems to me that the children who come here at an early age ought to be able to pursue their education in an institution in their State and not have to pay exorbitant out-of-state tuition just to do that. It seems to me that we ought to try to unite families. As Americans, we value families, and we ought to do something about that.

The fact is that people in immigrant detention, these folks are often some of the most abused folks in our community, Madam Speaker. I will just refer again to what the Congressman from Colorado mentioned a moment ago, detention, people are there for months, but these folks, some of them have been through tremendous ordeals; some are torture victims, some are victims of trafficking, some are from other vulnerable groups and are detained for months and even years, further aggravating their isolation, depression, and sometimes mental health problems.

The fact is that this situation is not right. These people are not criminals. They should not be held this way. And they're held at our expense—we're the ones who fork it over—but it's no picnic for them either. The fact is that we have to do something about it.

Over 30,000 people are held in immigrant detention on any given day at an average cost of more than \$100, \$120 per day. This has resulted in over 380,000 people held in detention in fiscal year 2009. Think about it: that's an incredible expense that we are paying because our immigration system has not been corrected, has not been addressed, and the fact is that we have to do something about it.

Since 2005, ICE has increased the number of detention beds by 78 percent. Taxpayers are paying the price of DHS's skyrocketing use of immigration detention, and DHS spends about \$1.7 billion on ICE custody operations.

□ 2000

So the fact is that a human toll is being taken. The broken immigration system offends our sense of fairness, and it offends our sense of being a humanitarian country. We've got to do something about it right away.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. POLIS. Madam Speaker, how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. There are 17 minutes remaining.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you.

I am glad that my friend from Minnesota brought up the important issue of detention. The Department of Homeland Security and ICE had 380,000 people in 2009 who were detained at taxpayer expense. One of the things we fear with the Arizona law is that these could actually be American citizens out working one day.

Oh, you don't have your papers. You're in detention. It could take a week. It could take a month.

There are many Americans who might have difficulty furnishing those records. Again, I point in particular to

those who were born of a midwife or who are very elderly or whose birth hospitals have been subject to fires or to disasters, where records are unable to be located or where they've been lost or where it simply has been human error. Each of these 380,000 people who were detained last year were detained at taxpayer expense. Now, I would argue that that is not good for them and that it's not good for us, the taxpayers.

First of all, as my colleague from Minnesota mentioned, 107 died, in many cases, due to medical treatment being withheld, due to abuses. In the incarceration system, in many cases, they are put in with actual criminals who have been convicted of crimes. Again, these are people who are not serving criminal sentences. They are being detained while awaiting decisions on their immigration proceedings. They might either then be released into our country or expelled through a different country, but despite that, they are held in prisons and jails, and they're often mixed with the general prison population, putting them at risk for their lives and limbs, all at taxpayer expense.

To the extent that it allows for the apprehension of more people, the Arizona law will simply result in the greater taxpayer expense of putting people up at the tune of \$120 a day. You know, that's what it costs. When I looked at it, I said, Gosh. We can put them up at Motel 6 for a quarter of that cost. Yet we continue, the taxpayers across our country, because of our complete failure to protect our borders and to have real immigration policy that works for our Nation. Over 300,000 people were incarcerated at taxpayer expense last year.

Comprehensive immigration reform is an American solution. It's common sense. It's fair. It's balanced. It has overwhelming support from the American people. Eighty-one percent agree that comprehensive reform is a balanced approach and that it's fair to taxpayers.

Voters across the board, from liberal to conservative, believe it is unrealistic to simply try to deport our way out of this problem. Seven in 10 voters agree that, in addition to increased enforcement and securing the border, illegal immigrants should be required to register and to meet conditions for permanent status. A comprehensive approach to immigration reform secures our borders, cracks down on employers who hire illegally, makes sure that we have real verification of who is able to work, and requires that illegal immigrants pay taxes and learn English to be eligible for permanent status. Voters should know that comprehensive immigration reform is an orderly process and that it will turn what has been completely uncontrolled and chaotic into a controlled flow of immigrants that continue to build our Nation and to reestablish the rule of law across our great Nation.